

Mid Michigan Community College

Testimony by President Carol A. Churchill before the Senate Education Committee

May 14, 2014

Regarding SB 745, 746, and 747

Senator Pavlov (Chair), Senator Emmons, Senator Colbeck, Senator Hopgood, Senator Young

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bills 745, 746, and 747. As these bills wend their way through the legislative process, I am encouraged that legislators continue to seek the input of the Michigan Community College Association and the 28 community colleges they represent. We have seen significant improvements in the bills that will better serve students as a result. However, there are still points of interest I would like to share with you today, including the overall importance of dual enrollment, the importance of language, and the importance of fiscal responsibility as we consider how the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act 160 of 1996 has been enacted over the past 18 years.

Dual enrollment is of vital importance to Mid Michigan Community College.

Dual enrollment has become a primary strategic initiative of MMCC, incorporated intentionally into our Strategic Plan that was informed by nearly 300 internal and external stakeholders. Why did dual enrollment rise to this level of strategic importance?

Because in our in-district counties of Clare and Gladwin, college degree attainment is abysmally low, 20.91% and 20.76% respectively, compared to 36.8% for Michigan as a whole and 38% for the nation.¹ Many of our surrounding counties show degree attainment sometimes even lower. Consequently, at MMCC we are out to change the culture, one student at a time, one course at a time, one success at a time.

We want to empower young people to rise up out of the soul-robbing constraints of generational poverty. We want to create an environment where young people's dreams can become real because they are supported by solid goals with attainable plans. We want to ensure that every young person understands the need for high school completion and continued postsecondary education or training that will enable them to be productive members in our complex, global society.

We realized some time ago that we cannot hope to achieve that vision if we wait until these young people arrive on our doorsteps. We cannot be effective if we operate in educational silos, divorced from our K-12 colleagues, and making the student figure out how these educational structures connect. We have to create effective paths linking our institutions, paths that transition students effectively. In just a few weeks, we cannot effectively teach college success strategies if productive behaviors and foundational skills are lacking when that young person

¹ Lumina Foundation, *A Stronger Michigan Through Higher Education*, June 2013

appears at our admissions counter. Yet just a few weeks is typically all the time we have to impact such students until they disappear forever, out of frustration and defeat, into existences that are always precarious and therefore a burden on society. So, as a part of our strategic planning, we decided to take action. The Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act 160 of 1996 provided the vehicle. As we consider the whole concept of dual enrollment, there are some points that I ask you to keep top of mind.

Dual enrollment has considerable variability, which allows educators to meet the needs of their regions.

I have been a college administrator for 25 years. In that time, I have lived and worked in institutions close to or within your senate districts. Each of those localities have very different demographics and socio-economic conditions. But the versatility of PA 160 has enabled the colleges in each of those districts to address the needs of their constituents in exactly the way every unique region needs to be served.

Even though there are significant geographical differences, every educator working in the domain of dual enrollment begins with the same starting point, by asking, “What are the academic needs of our students?” The differing answers could entail such things as expanding the scope of a limited high school curriculum, providing options for high achieving students, overcoming challenges of location where transportation is an issue, instilling educational goals in a region with low college degree attainment, building a workforce that relates to regional industry needs, and so on. How the educational leaders involved answer the question drives the dual enrollment paradigm in very different directions.

Even the high schools within a region have different needs. That is why, at MMCC, we provide an array of dual enrollment options as described in the small brochure I have provided you. The courses can be delivered in a variety of venues. Some are completely on ground with an instructor physically in front of the class. Some are completely online or offered through interactive television at multiple locations simultaneously. Some are hybrid, delivered partially on ground and partially online.

Depending on the school’s needs, high school students may drive to one of our campuses to take classes that meet their individual preferences and plans. We may offer a course or two at a high school, often during “zero” hour before classes even begin in the morning. Or, we may offer a full-blown program, what we call “Enhanced Dual Enrollment,” in our unique model that supports Early or Middle College designations. In those arrangements, high school students are on a path to earn significant college credits, perhaps even an associate’s degree, by the time they complete their high school requirements, sometimes finishing their academic program in a fifth year of high school.

Definitions and precise language are important in discussing dual enrollment.

Many dual enrollment models have emerged in an academic environment that associates meaning to terms with acute precision. The current bills contain language and some imprecision that poses concerns. There are many nuances to the term “concurrent enrollment” that are not

clear in the bills. In 2012, the Michigan Community College Association adopted a definition for concurrent enrollment based on the definition of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. They define concurrent enrollment as a course that “provides high school students the opportunity to take college-credit bearing courses taught by college-approved high school teachers.”² Such a course is generally considered to be offered on the high school site during the regular school day. Consequently, concurrent enrollment is merely a subset of dual enrollment, based solely on who teaches the class. Does this subset warrant specific regulatory legislation, and if so, why would not that language reside in PA 160 instead of in PA 451 (the revised school code) and in the Community College Act of 1966?

Other language further confuses who has responsibility for concurrent enrollment classes. For example, the language at SB746; Sec 132 (2) stipulates that community colleges provide college credit “for the courses at the community college that correspond to those concurrent enrollment courses.” A concurrent enrollment class is not an equivalent class; it is the college course in its entirety, taught by a qualified adjunct who happens to be a high school teacher. The language at SB746; Sec (5) (B) (i) also states that “the public high school may provide concurrent enrollment courses for which the community college shall provide college credit . . .” A high school does not provide the course; it is a college course provided by the college, using college syllabi, textbooks and materials, delivered according to college standards. It is merely taught by a qualified adjunct who happens to be a high school instructor. Public high schools are not authorized to offer college courses.

Selecting the best instructor to fit the situation benefits everyone.

Concurrent enrollment is simply one staffing option that has the benefit of maximizing scarce resources. At MMCC, once we identify the academic needs of students, the appropriate delivery system and courses, we determine who teaches a specific class. The important concept here is that the instructor’s qualifications must adhere to college standards and be exactly the same qualifications possessed by any other instructor teaching for the college. The MCCA verified that this is a value to which all 28 community colleges adhere. At MMCC, the selection process is the same for teaching at a high school site as it would be if we were selecting an adjunct instructor to teach on one of our campuses or at an accessible community location. Anyone wishing to teach must submit a complete application packet and successfully undergo an interview by a search team comprised of MMCC faculty and staff.

Sometimes, the instructor selection process has resulted in a high school instructor being selected as the best candidate to teach one or more courses, the scenario that is called “concurrent enrollment” in the bills under discussion today. Other times, the hiring process results in one of our full-time instructors teaching at a high school. Several times, the process has resulted in one of our seasoned instructors teaching alongside a high school teacher to ensure the instructional methodology is what the department requires. In our Enhanced Dual Enrollment model, we provide an array of courses that intentionally provide opportunities for students to complete

² “What is Concurrent Enrollment?” National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (n.d.) Web 13 May 2014 < >

significant coursework along academic pathways in science and math, liberal arts, or technical programs. In these comprehensive, well planned programs, the same student may be taking courses from a high school teacher performing the role of an adjunct and from one of our regular adjuncts and from one of our full-time instructors and from a team of instructors. In all cases, we select the candidate who most appropriately fills the instructional role. Students, parents, administrators and community members have no reason to question the competency of any instructor because they all meet the same standards.

That is why I am concerned about the specific language that teases out concurrent enrollment. This distinctive legislation creates unnecessary complexity and begs the question of creating a separate instructional classification, not based on the quality or content of the course, but rather on who is standing at the front of the class. There is an implicit question posed: why are there separate regulations for this instructor and this instructional venue? Is there something substandard or essentially different at the core that warrants additional regulatory oversight in this case? If so, as a parent, should I allow my student to participate? We all fear that legislation designed to incentivize more degree attainment will have the opposite effect of creating an educational delivery system that by its very nature questions the quality of the instruction.

Quality control already exists.

All accredited postsecondary institutions in Michigan operate under the oversight of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. The HLC is keenly interested in any arrangements that provide instruction in off-campus locations. Several of their criteria for accreditation, which is fundamental to our continued operations, speak specifically to the process by which we ensure oversight and quality in our off-campus dual enrollment programs. At MMCC, our longest running off-campus program is at Farwell High School. Just two weeks ago, we underwent an approval process by the HLC for that location. The evaluators spoke with our faculty and staff, inspected documents and course materials, and visited with staff at the off-campus location. Their verbal report indicated that we will be approved precisely because all of the quality benchmarks are well in place. Why would our legislature conclude that additional oversight and regulation are necessary?

There are significant direct and indirect costs associated with all forms of dual enrollment, including concurrent enrollment.

No matter how the instructor selection process occurs, there are direct instructional costs involved. At MMCC, we compensate off campus instructors at a level that aligns with the compensation for individuals teaching in a traditional setting on campus. In the case of concurrent enrollment, the compensation is paid directly to the school at a flat rate so we do not create a situation where the teacher is receiving pay twice for the same instructional period. In addition, we pay for any supplemental instruction the teacher may provide outside of the actual classroom instructional hours required for the MMCC course. These are the direct costs of concurrent enrollment.

In offering academic programs and services, there are also many indirect costs. When the programs and services are offered off-campus, the indirect costs are inflated because of the time,

complexity and cost of deploying a whole cadre of MMCC personnel to ensure that the courses and services we are offering meet the college's standards. College administrators and staff are involved in aligning all the components of the programs, from registering students to developing strategies to deliver instruction on a high school calendar that always varies from the college calendar in numerous ways. Our deans conduct onsite faculty performance evaluations; our faculty select and mentor new onsite adjuncts, some who may be high school teachers. Faculty also evaluate the facilities to determine if laboratories, software, and other learning objects are equivalent to our on-campus standards; many times, lab techs and instructional technology staff must be deployed to deliver and set up equivalent labs, supplies and software. We send advisors to the schools to deliver placement testing that will assure the correct placement into classes and to advise students on courses that will meet both their career plans and their level of competency. Human Resources is involved in the instructor selection process and the Business Office in billing transactions. We employ a full-time Off-Campus Coordinator to oversee all of this complexity, and several personnel in our Admissions office to do the front-end development of these programs, including communication sessions for high school personnel and parents that are vital in ensuring that everyone understands all of the intricacies of undertaking a college level program of study. And at the end of the day, there is the overarching involvement of college leadership, who bears the responsibility for motivating the college to be innovative, to forgo the ease of maintaining the status quo to serve their community. Each and every one of these quality control activities constitutes a considerable cost to the college.

Language regulating tuition for the specific delivery system of concurrent enrollment presents a major disincentive.

The innovation occurring under the dual enrollment legislation has been a long time coming. In both the K-12 systems and the college, it is a leadership feat to introduce the complexity of dual enrollment in all its forms, including concurrent enrollment. Undue regulatory complexity may well make this daunting task impossible, especially if language regulating tuition finds its way back into the bills.

Language that seeks to establish or regulate tuition does not consider the many unique factors that inform each college's tuition development. In setting tuition rates, our board of trustees looks carefully at the level of revenues from projected enrollments, state appropriations, millage rates and overall property values, college foundation revenues, grant support and so on. We do not base tuition solely on the cost of an individual program as this legislation suggests. Doing so would lead to exorbitant tuition for high cost programs in technical and health care fields. Rather, in setting tuition, the board continually performs an intricate juggling act that balances the workforce and educational needs of the region with the accessibility needs of our students. Our fiscally conservative board of trustees realizes the criticality of strategic decisions as they affect our financial stability. Because MMCC bears the dubious distinction of operating most years at the lowest per pupil funding of all community colleges in Michigan, we prudently calculate the Return on Investment for every endeavor, including all dual enrollment programs, to ensure that we are deploying our resources in a fiscally accountable manner that will keep the

college financially sustainable and therefore able to continue serving the needs of our region. To do otherwise would not be responsible stewardship of our resources.

In addition, there is an equity issue that cannot be overlooked. Those who enjoy in-district tuition do so because they support the college through millage revenues authorized by the electorate. To allow other constituents who do not pay taxes the same privilege creates an inequitable situation that cannot be justified. Instead of legislation that absolves citizens of their responsibility to fund services they need or desire, might we suggest that we focus more on legislation that allows all districts of the state to annex into a community college district that they support through local millages?

Dual enrollment programs, including concurrent enrollment, are making a difference.

Reaching out to our K-12 systems is the right thing to do when areas are underserved, when poverty shapes non-productive value systems, when students need to be challenged to reach their full potential, and when postsecondary degree attainment is so dismal. Farwell is illustrative. This year, from a senior class of 108 students, 80 graduated with college credits. Fifty-two percent had at least one semester of college completed while two students had completed more than 40 credits. Another 24 students had earned from three to eleven credits for a total of 1,367 college credits earned by the 80 students. All are planning to continue their college educations and have made concrete plans to do so. While many are going to MMCC, their plans are taking them to colleges all over the state and the nation.

As one Farwell student so earnestly told me, “We feel and act like college students now. This program weans us from high school in a way that takes away the fear. Many of my friends who never considered college now understand they can do it.” That is not a bad descriptor of the value of dual enrollment; the act has worked to incentivize students toward completion while motivating schools and colleges to work together toward student success.

Our first Early College graduate from Farwell described his experience in eloquent terms at a recent awards ceremony. He was on a fast track to drug induced crime that most surely would have ended in a life time of imprisonment. Instead, he is a proud graduate of the Early College program with coursework from MMCC, and he is in his third year of an engineering degree at Kettering University, fully supported by scholarships based on his Early College success. He has changed himself and his success has influenced those around him. He is productive and contributing to the betterment of society. He experienced a program that was locally designed to be high quality, cost efficient and effective. Let us continue to design those programs, managing the design, the staffing, and the financial models so at the end of the day, we are all both progressive and sustainable.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

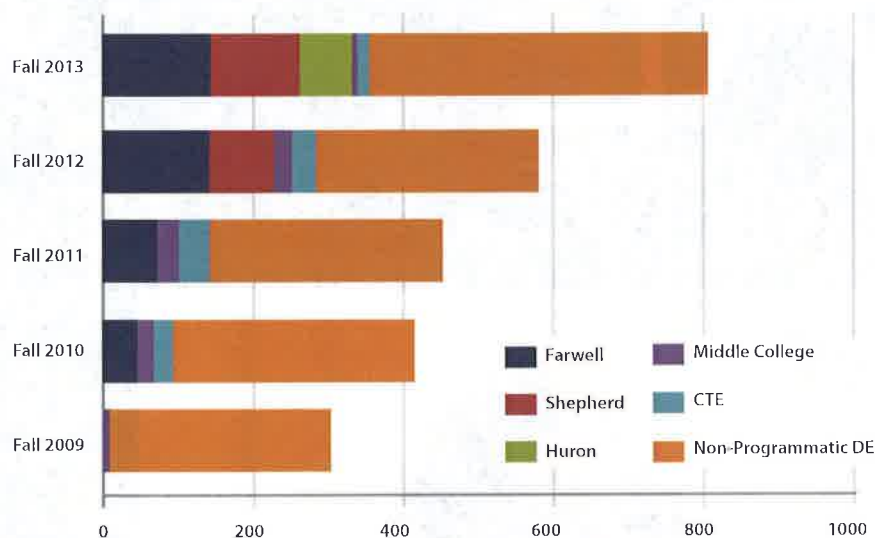
Data Flyer



Mid Michigan
Community College

Great careers start here.

Dual Enrollment by Head Count and Type

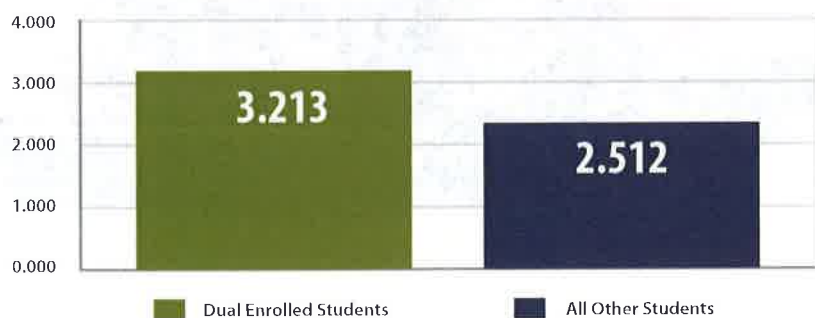


MMCC's dual enrollment program has grown 220% over the last five years!

Schools like Farwell, Shepherd and Huron ISD have been big pieces of that growth as they transition to the Enhanced Dual Enrollment Model. Overall, more high schools are recognizing the benefit of offering college courses to their students.

Fall 2013 - MMCC Average G.P.A.

On average, dual enrolled students have a higher G.P.A. than the general student body. There are many reasons for this. First, dual enrolled students are usually high performing students in their high schools. Additionally, both MMCC and the local school provide supports for the student to help them succeed. These supports may include follow-up with advisors and school counselors, team teaching arrangements, and other school-based supports like study hours and supplemental instruction.



Meet One of our Dual Students:

BethAnn Morgan attends Alma College. She started there as a junior in the Fall of 2012, even though she'd just graduated from Chippewa Hills High School in May of 2010.

Through dual enrolling her entire senior year and attending MMCC during spring terms and the 2011 school year, BethAnn completed two years of her program at MMCC by the time she'd been out of high school for one year.

"I loved my dual enrollment experience. It prepared me to jump into being a fulltime student as soon as I graduated. It taught me how I learned best, how to interact in classes, and how to get the most out of my education. MMCC is a really interactive environment, and the small classes and personal approach of its instructors perfectly equipped me to transition into college."

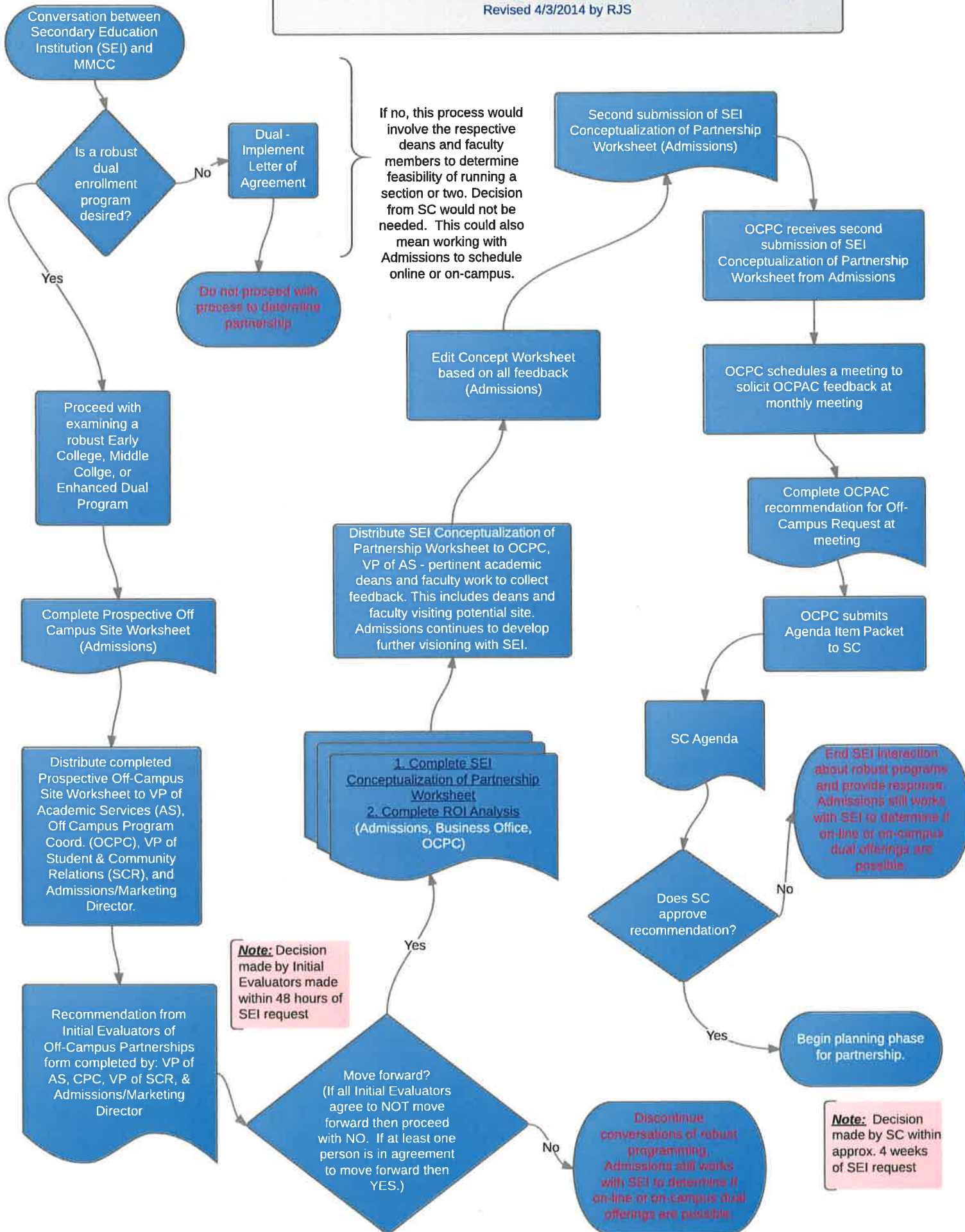
"For me, it was so important to learn about college while in high school. I think it's part of the reason I can manage my time so well and a big reason for the plans that I have to keep pursuing education, even past a bachelors degree. I'm confident that I can succeed."

BethAnn plans to pursue a masters degree at MSU when she completes her bachelors degree at Alma College.

(BethAnn is featured on the Cover)

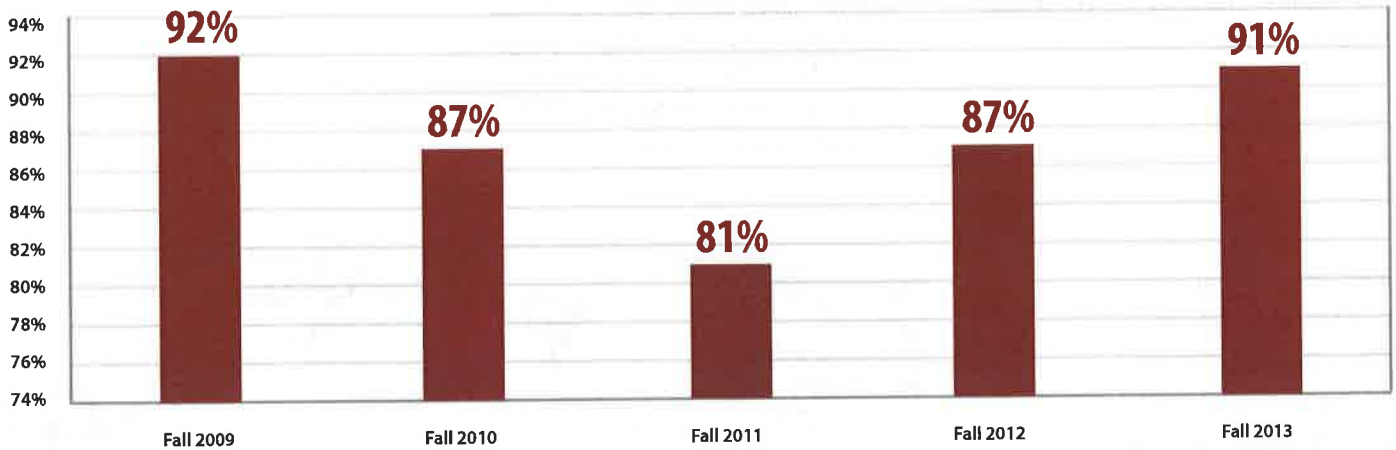
Phase 1: Assessing Off-Campus Partnerships

Revised 4/3/2014 by RJS



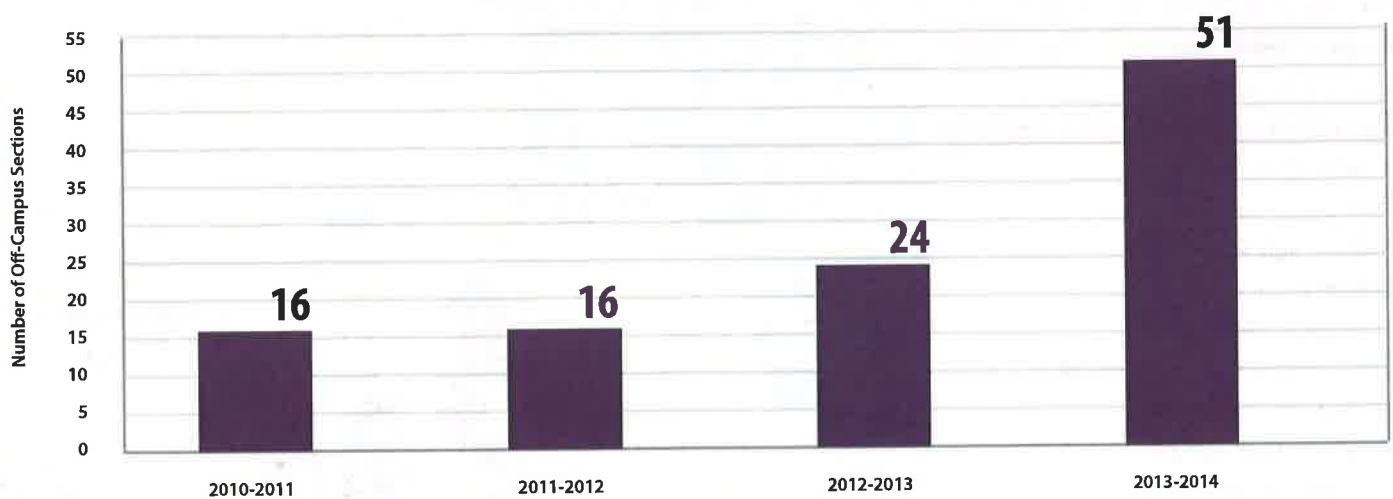


The Percentage of Dual Students Attaining a "C or Better"



Over time, the performance of dual enrolled students has been very consistent. We use the "C or better" measure for performance because that grade is generally required for transfer purposes.

Number of College Courses Offered Off-Campus



Dual enrollment has been growing across the board, but the dramatic increase in sections is directly related to the additional schools choosing an enhanced dual enrollment model. This model views dual enrollment as a long-term, programmatic commitment to enabling students to make significant progress toward a degree.

Current Secondary Education Institutions with MMCC Dual Students

MMCC is serving dual enrolled students all over the state. Students take courses on our campuses in Harrison and Mt. Pleasant, online, or at their high school or ISD.

The schools highlighted in the list have moved to an enhanced dual enrollment model. While both standard and enhanced dual enrollment models meet the needs of students, the enhanced model is unique.

Enhanced dual enrollment is viewed as a "program" rather than a few supplemental courses. The program is characterized by a series of courses over a number of years that results in significant progress toward a degree. While the relationship and configuration will be unique at each school district (based on semester configuration, size, scope), this programmatic approach will formalize course offerings. Most students will move through a program as a cohort. This system provides efficiencies in advising and registration as well as peer support.

For enhanced dual enrollment students, the college experience is supplemented with assessment, advising, and informational opportunities offered on-campus or at the high school to help students prepare to transition out of high school.

Alma High School
 Beal City High School
 Beaverton High School
 Big Rapids High School
 Breckenridge High School
 Bullock Creek High School
 Chippewa Hills High School
 Clare Public High School
 Clare-Gladwin Middle College
 Clare-Gladwin CTE, Welding
 Coleman High School
 Evert High School
 Farwell High School
 Gladwin High School
 Harrison High School
 Huron Intermediate School District
 Ithaca High School
 Lake City High School
 Marion High School
 McBain High School
 Montabella High School
 Morley-Stanwood High School
 Mt Pleasant High School
 Newberry High School
 Saint Louis High School
 Shepherd High School

Emphasis added to
 Enhanced Dual Enrollment Partners
 (Current and Launching FALL 2014)

